State 4-H Recognition
Organizing and Designing
Your Application Materials

When applying for National 4-H Conference, National 4-H Congress, State 4-H Council, or State Project Awards, please consider the following suggestions.

All opportunities require you to answer a set of 5 to 6 short answer questions in no more than 300 words each typed directly into the online application. You also will have the opportunity to upload up to two (2) additional pages of support material. The support material should relate to and show a relationship to the opportunity for which you are applying.

Support material may not exceed two (2) pages for each opportunity for which you are applying. The support material may include a story, resume, record forms, or photos. You may use whatever method helps you best express your information. You may upload two files, but not more than 2 pages combined.

As you think about how you are going to share your 4-H experiences through your short answer questions and support material, follow these steps:

A) Gather materials

If you have been keeping a record book, scrapbook, or portfolio, you will already have most of what you need. If not, gather as many of the following items as you can:

• project records and other records of your 4-H involvement and achievements
• participation summary
• awards and certificates
• programs or materials from conferences or workshops you have participated in or facilitated
• scrapbooks, newspaper clippings, or other reports of accomplishments
• meeting minutes and activity reports

B) Examine criteria and objectives for the award/opportunity for which you are applying.

• Evaluation forms show the criteria for a successful applicant.
• One page hand-outs describing each opportunity explain the objectives of the experience for participants.
• Video interviews of previous participants are posted on the web explaining the experiences and sharing qualities of good candidates.
• As you organize your thoughts, keep the criteria and objectives up front and center. You can find all evaluation and information materials on the State 4-H Recognition website at http://www.extension.iastate.edu/4h/page/recognition-opportunities
C) Create a personal inventory

Look through the materials you have gathered, and think back over your 4-H experience. Brainstorm about who you are, what excites and motivates you, what you have to contribute, and more. This exercise will help you to identify samples and ideas that will tell your story. Think about the following categories:

- **Project Area Accomplishments and Skills**
  What have been your most enjoyable and satisfying experiences or achievements? How did you accomplish them and what tools or means did you use? Did you gain confidence or a sense of achievement?

  Take your favorite skills and list them in order of preference. Next to each skill, list ways in which you used that skill in 4-H, school, or other projects and what you accomplished.

- **Self-Evaluation/Goals**
  List your personal qualities and characteristics. We often have difficulty giving ourselves credit for things we are good at, so ask friends, family members or past 4-H’ers. Which of these qualities could you feature in your material? How would you represent it?

  What is one thing your friends and family can always count on about you — something they know you’ll always do for them? If you were going to include this how would you do it? Could you simply describe it, write a story, use photos or records or include a sample of your skill?

  Sometimes our true character comes out when we are challenged. Each challenge you meet (a tough class, a difficult relationship, a trying job search) can give you increased confidence. Describe a challenge you faced and overcame. What talents or abilities did you use to meet the challenge? What samples of these might you include?

- **Citizenship and Service Experience**
  We all belong to groups of one kind or another. List one or more groups you belong to. What talents or interests do you use as a member of these groups? List examples that demonstrate talents you use as a member of these groups, such as leadership or organizational skills.

  What are some things you do to help others? Maybe you volunteer your time, energy, and talents to help friends, neighbors, and family members. List your volunteer experiences and who was impacted.

  Consider sharing how you define citizenship and how you’ve been an active, responsible citizen in your local community and beyond. How have you shown social responsibility, respect and timely response to the needs, rights and responsibilities of others?
• **Work and Leisure/Miscellaneous Information**
  When was the last time you earned money, a special privilege, or a reward? What sample of this talent might you include? List some of your leisure interests and how they connect to what you are applying for.

D) **Organizing and Designing Your Support Material**
- There are several formats you can use for your support material.
- Consider how the information you include will help the evaluator find what they are looking for to meet the criteria on the evaluation form.
- Be selective. You probably cannot include everything that you have accomplished and/or in which you have participated.
- Good organization is important to the evaluator so he or she may follow your presentation and conveniently find information that addresses the selection criteria.

1. A **RESUME** may be one option to consider for all OR part of the support material. Consider the type of resume and information that fits what you want to share. See examples following.
   a) **Personal Resume**
      - personal information: name, address, etc.
      - scholastic status: school, grade, G.P.A., class rank, etc.
      - educational/career goals
      - 4-H participation, projects, leadership, citizenship
      - school activities, leadership positions, honors/awards, etc.
      - community/church involvement, participation
   b) **4-H Resume**
      - club name and county
      - years of membership
      - offices held, committees served on
      - 4-H projects enrolled in, number of years
      - 4-H goals and objectives
      - knowledge and skills learned - size and scope
      - summary of growth (in project), list and/or by years
      - 4-H recognitions
      - 4-H Leadership and citizenship opportunities
      - others?

2. 4-H **story** or narrative format
   a) **Introduction**
      Consider a way to gain the reader's attention. What is unique about you and your accomplishments?

   EXAMPLES:
   - A quote: *I hear and I accept, I see and I remember, but I do and I understand.*
   - A statement: Imagine, being selected 'Bronson's Best Cook' at the age of 12.
A story: On a cold winter day, I began a journey traveling in an IH 4366 4-WD tractor from ______ to home, never guessing how far this journey would take me.

Select a related theme: *Ovis aries*: what a funny name. (Sheep project award.)

"Have you hugged a tree today?" Nature and outdoors is one of my primary interests.

Include evaluation of what you have learned, gained, accomplished. Expressing related feelings, attitudes, beliefs are appropriate.

Be realistic and honest. What worked and what did not work that you planned. The human-interest story may add a positive impact.

b) **Format options for the body**

- A well organized paragraph by paragraph narrative.
- Narrative with noted headings for sections of information.
- Interview format. Questions relating to project or trip with responses.
- Newsletter or newspaper format with headings for various sections.
- Narrative with related photos interspersed that help to visually tell the story.

3. **Other Options**

a) **Listing of accomplishments**

- Summarize significant contributions listed by years or by topic.
- Identify Goal - i.e. To develop and practice leadership and flesh out how you did that.
- List contribution by level - club, county, area, state, community, school, etc.

b) **Question**

Answer related to topic (could be a project, communications, citizenship, etc.)

- What is my definition of leadership?
- How do people develop leadership?
- What can I contribute by attending . . . .?

c) **Record keeping forms that may help you to tell/show accomplishments**

- Livestock records that may show size and scope of project, $ value, etc.
- Garden project: planting, harvesting and sales record.
- Outline for a workshop you planned and conducted.
- Worksheets you developed for special project.
- Samples of work - Photography is logical one to actually ‘show’ your skill; drawings or sketches for visual art item; sketches of clothing designs; plans for room rearrangement, etc.

d) **Photo pages**

- Select action photos that visually help to tell/and or add to your story. Use captions to communicate/emphasize the point of the photo.
- **YOU** should appear in the photo, doing, helping, showing, etc.
- In some cases organize by topic showing specific project, leadership, community service, etc.
- If doing a photo collage think about, "More is not always better."
4. Additional pointers to consider for application questions and support material:
   - Use the information you’ve gathered to help you thoroughly answer your application questions.
   - Answers may be typed or copied/pasted into the online application and are limited to 300 words.
   - Check carefully for grammatical, spelling, and typing errors.
   - When appropriate use technology to your advantage, such as, bolding headings or key points, underlining, bullets/outlines, etc.
   - Use action verbs to accurately describe what you have done. Did you "help" or did you actually "plan and conduct"? Some words to consider:
     - assisted
     - explained
     - planned
     - constructed
     - initiated
     - presented
     - coordinated
     - learned
     - revised
     - developed
     - maintained
     - selected
     - directed
     - managed
   - Use the support pages to elaborate on your 4-H experiences. Stress how your projects have grown, what you learned, and how you have benefited. Keep this in mind when answering application questions as well.
   - Watch for vague or broad statements. Give specific examples, explain and include details.
   - Including non-4-H activities is okay but, if possible, share how 4-H experiences may be related or may have contributed. (Learned sewing skills in 4-H, now help with costumes for the school play).

To apply, it's a similar process for each of the opportunities listed at http://www.extension.iastate.edu/4h/page/recognition-opportunities.
   - Click on "Application" under the Opportunity for which you wish to apply.
   - Fill out an electronic cover sheet that will then give you the unique JotForm link to your application. You will also receive an email with the link to your application so you can access it as many times as needed until you click "Submit".
   - Fill out information pertinent to the opportunity. Each time you click on a "Next" button your application information will be saved. You may exit the application and then access it again with the link you were given.
   - Answer five directed questions about the application specific opportunity or honor.
   - Type in or attach two pages of support material to enhance your application.
   - Be prepared to travel to ISU in Ames on Saturday, March 28, 2015 to interview.

(Note: If you have a true conflict with this date, other arrangements can be made. Contact Cayla Taylor, cayla@iastate.edu, 515-294-1877.)

Enjoy preparing and sharing YOUR 4-H story!

Questions on the JotForm process? Contact isu4hrecognition@gmail.com.

Iowa State University
Extension and Outreach

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